

Comment on the proposed conservation of usage of *Narella* Gray, 1870 (Coelenterata, Octocorallia) by designation of a neotype for its type species *Primnoa regularis* Duchassaing & Michelotti, 1860 (Case 3276; see BZN 61: 7–10)

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I worked on the octocoral family PRIMNOIDAE years ago, and I know the ‘*Narella*-problem’. I welcome the proposals by Cairns & Bayer and am pleased that they took the initiative to apply to the Commission for settling the problem by designating a neotype for the type species of the genus. After much instability in the past we may be glad that the name *Narella* is accepted and everybody working with octocorals knows what *Narella* is. It would be highly undesirable to upset the prevailing usage of this name, which has been used consistently for over half a century, as it would cause a reversion to old, largely unknown names. I fear as a consequence, mainly in field guides and textbooks, that some authors would follow and others would not and new confusions would begin. I approve of the aim of the application and ask the Commission to support the proposals.

Comment on the proposed conservation of usage of *Thereva* Latreille, 1797 (Insecta, Diptera) by designation of *Musca plebeja* Linnaeus, 1758 as the type species of *Thereva*

(Case 3251; see BZN 60: 198–202)

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1. I wish to record my opposition to the proposals by Holston et al. for action under the plenary power relating to the names *Thereva* Latreille, 1797 and *Thereva* Fabricius, 1798. The *Thereva* problem treated by Holston et al. is only the tip of the iceberg. Fabricius, famous for his pioneering elaboration of a ‘Systema’ for the insects in a series of works from 1775 to his death in 1808, ‘borrowed’ numerous generic names established by contemporary colleagues and deliberately used them in an entirely different meaning from what was originally intended. The Commission Secretariat holds a complete overview of such incidences in Fabricius’s work covering only the Diptera.

2. Holston et al. (see para. 11 of the application) suggested that Fabricius’s usage of *Thereva* (for a group of tachinid flies) should be treated as a misapplied use of Latreille’s name, which was clearly intended for stiletto flies. They interpreted *Thereva* Fabricius as an unavailable name under Article 52.2 of the Code. A consequence of this is that Herting’s (1984) designation of *Conops subcoleoptratus* Linnaeus, 1797 as type species of *Thereva* Fabricius, 1798 threatens the long

established usage of the name *Thereva* Latreille. Because of this unfortunate side effect of their interpretation, Holston et al. have asked the Commission to set aside all previous fixations of type species for *Thereva* Latreille, 1797 and to reject the name *Thereva* Fabricius, 1798 as a junior homonym. As an invalid name this request seems redundant. Perhaps this is an indication that the authors are not fully convinced about the status of *Thereva* Fabricius as an invalid name.

3. In an assessment of Fabricius's usage of generic names it should be asked whether they satisfy the criteria of availability (Articles 10 to 20 of the Code). If they do not meet all necessary conditions, we must follow Holston et al. and disregard them as names without formal standing in nomenclature. If, on the contrary, they stand up to all necessary criteria of availability, there is no formal hindrance to treating them as proper nominal taxa with their own authorship and date. The Code does not reveal any provisions that prevent availability of such names as *Bibio* Fabricius, 1775 and *Thereva* Fabricius, 1798. However, this observation alone is far from conclusive evidence. In fact, the same goes for truly misidentified names (i.e. unintentional misidentification of existing names, a category of names that is conventionally not considered as available). Existing names unintentionally proposed for new taxa are, on the contrary, available with their own authorship and date. However, when recognized as junior homonyms such names are usually not used as valid (see Articles 10.6, 11.10 and 52).

4. In light of the above examples, how should we treat Fabrician names in this category of existing names intentionally proposed for new taxa? Strange and confusing as those actions may appear today, we should keep in mind that Fabricius worked at a time without any constraints, in terms of Code regulations, such as the Principles of Priority and Homonymy. Would it be in the spirit of the Code to set aside Fabricius's clear intentions by dismissing his alternative usages of names? I do not think so, particularly with reference to one of its underlying principles, which is to refrain from 'infringing upon taxonomic judgment, which must not be made subject to regulation or restraint' (Code, p. xix).

5. It is perfectly clear that Fabricius 'borrowed' such generic names as *Bibio*, *Hirtea*, and *Thereva* etc. from his colleagues and then openly and intentionally proposed new usages for them. Ignoring this fact by degrading Fabricius's alternative usages into informal serial use is on one hand a clear violation of his intentions; on the other it leaves the impression that Fabricius often did not keep track of the results of his colleagues. Dismissal of Fabricius's alternative generic usages may also, as an unfortunate side effect, tend to obscure significant aspects of the early post-Linnaean history of insect classification.

6. Finally, because of the Principle of Homonymy, the safest and simplest way to promote nomenclatural stability is clearly to identify Fabricius's alternative usages of generic names and to treat them as nominal taxa in their own right.

Additional references

- Evenhuis, N.L. 1991. World catalog of genus-group names of bee flies (Diptera: Bombyliidae). *Bishop Museum Bulletins in Entomology*, **5**: 1–105.